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# ASCS Background Information

## Emergency/ Defense Activities

BI No. 4

United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Agricultural  
Stabilization and  
Conservation  
Service

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### DEFENSE PREPAREDNESS PROGRAM

#### Program Purpose

The purpose of the defense preparedness program in the U. S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is to maintain a state of readiness for carrying out food and agricultural programs under wartime conditions. USDA must be able to mobilize its forces rapidly. It also must provide leadership and guidance to State and local governments, farmers, the food industry, and the general public to ensure conservation and equitable distribution of the Nation's food supply and the preservation of agricultural resources.

USDA's defense responsibilities stem from program authorities and Executive Orders assigning emergency preparedness functions to the Secretary pursuant to statutes. The Secretary has assigned these responsibilities to agencies whose regular activities relate to programs essential in a defense emergency. The Director, Intergovernmental Affairs, Office of Governmental and Public Affairs (GPA), coordinates defense preparedness in USDA.

Within the Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service (ASCS), Deputy Administrators supervise defense preparedness through the offices under their jurisdiction. The Emergency Operations and Livestock Programs Division, which reports to the Deputy Administrator for State and County Operations, coordinates the total defense preparedness program for the agency.

#### Defense Emergency Responsibilities

ASCS experience in administering farm, commodity, natural disaster and conservation programs, and in managing Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) operations would be utilized in coordinating defense emergency activities.

ASCS would be responsible for:

- (1) Administering agricultural production programs including emergency controls on feed and seed and on domestic distribution of farm equipment and fertilizer.
- (2) Administering emergency controls on food processing, storage, and wholesale distribution, including grain storage and distribution.
- (3) Analyzing the emergency capabilities of agriculture, the food industry and support industries to supply requirements.

- (4) Assessing effects of attacks on assigned resources.
- (5) Guiding and informing agricultural and food industries and State governments on emergency plans.
- (6) Determining the needs of agriculture, the food industry and related agribusinesses for inputs of materials, manpower, fuel, and supplies and services necessary to support essential operations.
- (7) Providing assistance to agriculture, the food industry and related agribusinesses in obtaining essential inputs and services and in the rehabilitation of facilities.
- (8) Assisting the Director, Intergovernmental Affairs, GPA, by:
  - (a) Servicing USDA State and County Emergency Boards.
  - (b) Consolidating claims for materials, manpower, equipment, fuel, supplies, and services to support USDA defense program needs.
  - (c) Coordinating actions to expand productive capacity, materials, and facilities under the Defense Production Act of 1950, as amended.
  - (d) Representing USDA at interdepartmental defense preparedness meetings, government-wide exercises, and studies.
  - (e) Coordinating pre-emergency defense training.

The Commodity Credit Corporation would be responsible for:

- (1) Procuring needed agricultural commodities to provide emergency food supplies, and managing commodity inventories to assure their availability.
- (2) Guaranteeing or making emergency loans needed to process, store, and distribute food and other agricultural commodities and supporting materials.
- (3) Guaranteeing payment to firms authorized by USDA to provide a commodity under the jurisdiction of USDA or a related service.
- (4) Making reimbursable disbursements for Farmers Home Administration (FmHA) emergency production loans when mail services, or FmHA Finance Office or Disbursing Office of the Treasury activities are disrupted.



Emergency  
Boards  
Coordinate

USDA defense preparedness programs are coordinated by its emergency boards in each State, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands, and almost 3,000 counties. Board members are from USDA agencies having major defense duties. The boards also estimate the amount of rural damage caused by major natural disasters including nuclear power plant accidents, and coordinate USDA assistance within their geographic areas.

ASCS State Executive Directors represent ASCS on the USDA State emergency boards and serve as chairpersons. They also supervise the USDA county boards. The ASCS County Executive Director serves as chairperson of the USDA county emergency board.

In a defense emergency, if communications with higher USDA authority were cut off, both USDA State and county board chairpersons would have authority to make urgent program decisions affecting their geographic areas in accordance with established policies.

#### OTHER EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

Wildlife  
Feeding

CCC-owned grain may be donated to the Department of the Interior for feeding migratory waterfowl when threatened with starvation or for prevention of crop damage, upon a finding by the Secretary of the Interior that an emergency exists.

CCC-owned grain may also be donated to State agencies for feeding resident wildlife threatened with serious damage or loss from starvation, upon the request of appropriate State agencies and authorization by the Secretary of the Interior.

Indian  
Distress  
Program

CCC-owned feed grains may be donated to Indian tribes for livestock feeding under the Indian Acute Distress Donation Program following a decision by the Administrator of the ASCS that the chronic acute distress of the needy members of an Indian tribe has been materially increased due to severe drought, flood, hurricane, blizzard, or other catastrophe. Distribution of feed to the tribe is arranged by the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Department of the Interior.

